The economic crisis, the fall in the stock market, and the collapse in technology stocks that crept over the U.S. market in early 2001 affected most of the world. While Washington’s attention was riveted on Japan, whose continuing economic decline threatened to stall any chance of recovery in the U.S. market, Latin America’s economic problems began to surface. Brazil was not in a position strong enough to absorb ripples, much less the pounding waves of global economic crises. The crisis that swept Argentina at the end of 2001 temporarily bypassed Brazil.

Argentina absorbs more than 11 percent of Brazil’s exports and ranks third behind China and the United States as the nation’s most important trading partners. As Argentina’s crisis deepened, it cut back drastically on imports, especially big-ticket items like machinery, technology, automobiles, steel, and chemicals that supply the industrial sector. By the end of 2003, Argentina’s economy had stabilized. Under the leadership of Brazil’s new president, Lula, and Nestor Kirchner, elected president of Argentina in May 2003, the two nations embarked on cooperative trade policies, seeking to develop greater unity to counterbalance U.S. demands that both countries consider detrimental to their autonomy.

As it turned out, Brazil’s industrial, agricultural, and petroleum exports have been commanding very high prices. In the first decade of the 21st century, the economy has improved markedly as a result of diverse productivity in agriculture, industry, extractive, and service sectors. The international demand for food, especially soybeans and beef, both of which Brazil has in plenitude, in addition to the discovery of oil and gas reserves, has considerably upgraded Brazil’s economic forecast. As the world’s 10th-largest energy consumer, Brazil’s investment in hydroelectricity and ethanol was fortuitous. By century’s end, Brazil’s prospects appeared so promising that an economist from the U.S. investment firm of Goldman Sachs posited the BRIC thesis. Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC), the theorist claimed, were the four economies that would by 2050 be the most dominant in the world, surpassing in growth and wealth all existing world powers. No doubt there are those who disagree, and the world economic crisis beginning in 2008 could undercut any predictions, but Brazil’s position economically and politically has changed dramatically since the return to democracy.

No history of Brazil, no matter how brief, should overlook that part of life that absorbs the attentions of many ordinary people outside their places of work during much of their waking hours. Very often it is popular culture, as much or more than impersonal political and economic events, that engross the people of a nation and help them to define who they are on a day-to-day basis. In this chapter, the histories of the key features of the Brazilian pastime will be examined: samba and Carnival, futebol or soccer, the nighttime television melodramas called telenovelas, or simply novelas, and finally, cinema. In the case of Brazil, periodically during the 20th century and on into the 21st, popular culture, including dance, music, and sports, has moved from the streets and neighborhood bars of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Salvador da Bahia, to the clubs, movie theaters, dance halls, music stores, and sports arenas of the world.

Samba, Soccer, Television, and Movies

In 1939, Carmen Miranda became the most widely recognized Brazilian entertainer abroad and, as a result of shrewd contract negotiations, the most highly paid woman in Hollywood. In subsequent years, musicians such as Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Maria Bethânia, Milton Nascimento, Antônio Carlos Jobim, and others have enjoyed huge popularity and exerted a definite musical influence both inside and outside the country, from samba to the bossa nova to tropicalismo to jazz and jazz fusion.
Of all the diverse types of Brazilian music, the best-known is the infectious samba. During the 20th century, samba catapulted from its modest beginnings as a music sung and danced in neighborhood bars in the poorest sections of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro to become the signature for the yearly Carnival, a pre-Lenten extravaganza that stands as one of the world's biggest parties and the most important tourist attraction in Brazil.

On the sports front, since the 1960s when Pelé first dazzled the soccer world with his agile ball handling and powerful offensive play, Brazil has been synonymous with soccer. Going into the 2002 World Cup competition, Brazil had participated in every World Cup playoff since the games were resumed after World War II and had won an unprecedented four championships (1958, 1962, 1970, 1994). The 2002 team turned a lackluster qualifying circuit and widespread accusations of fraud and corruption in the Brazilian Soccer Federation (CBF) into a brilliant finish to capture its fifth cup, or Penta. Reaffirming the sport's grasp on the national psyche, half a million fans wildly cheered the victorious team as it arrived in Brazil on July 2 after defeating Germany in the final, 2-0, in Japan.

Finally, most Brazilians watch soccer, as well as Carnival and the pre-Carnival festivities on television, just as they are glued to the set for nearly all their news and entertainment. Brazil's media giant, TV Globo, is the largest network in Latin America and fourth largest in the world, reaching 80 million viewers daily. The passion of Brazilian home viewers is the nightly novela, or soap opera. The media frenzy surrounding the death of Daniella Perez, a television star from a popular novela, De Corpo e Alma ("Body and Soul"), in 1992 exemplified the novelas' place at the center of national popular culture. When the starlet's body was found on a roadside on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro in late December 1992, the nation turned its eyes from the day's top story, the impeachment of President Fernando Collor de Mello, to soak up the details of the sordid crime instead. In a case of reality imitating art, Perez's death garnered even more attention when it became clear that her assailant, who had punctured her body with 16 knife stabs, was her costar, Guilherme de Padua.

This chapter explores various aspects of Brazil's popular culture as a vibrant blend of the nation's African and European heritages. To know Brazilian popular culture, is to know a bit of the Brazilian character.

Carmen Miranda

One of the first Brazilian entertainers to make a mark internationally was Carmen Miranda. Born in Portugal, Miranda became a popular radio and film star in Brazil in the late 1920s. Despite her Portuguese past, Miranda had a decidedly Brazilian act, based on urban sambas, rotating hip dance moves, stylized and exaggerated hand, facial, and body gestures, all performed to an undulating conga drumbeat. Her trademark was to have her head wrapped in a turban topped with an elaborate fruit and flower arrangement. She sang and danced in an exaggerated headgear and attire based on that of Bahian market women.
that dated back to the time of slavery. In movies and in her popular nightclub acts, the white, Portuguese-born Miranda, projected the Brazilian mixed-race woman with a tropical flavor to adoring audiences in the United States and Europe.

Some Brazilians argued that Miranda’s bold, exaggerated style, the elaborate jewelry and costumes she performed in, were an embarrassment to a country trying to portray itself as a developing major power. Another faction of Brazilians rejected Miranda for leaving the country and building her reputation abroad. Apparently, for some she was “too Brazilian” but for many others she was “not Brazilian enough.” For example, in 1940 when she returned to Brazil for a series of performances she was met with little more than polite applause and even criticism that her act had become “too Americanized.”

When Carmen Miranda died in 1955, her popularity abroad was greater than in Brazil. Nonetheless, her contributions to the music and culture of Brazil should not be overlooked. Although she was accused of peddling Brazilian music and dance in a highly commercialized format, Carmen Miranda can be credited with bringing Brazil’s national music, the samba, to a worldwide audience. In addition, she introduced the image of the baiáma (Bahian traditional slave woman) with wide skirts and turbaned headdress as the “showgirl” of Brazil at home and abroad. The baiáma costume was adopted as the central feature of Carnival for women and, especially, for men, who famously dress up in elaborate Carmen Miranda style and parade through the streets of Brazil’s cities during Carnival.

Samba
Samba refers to both a rhythmic music and a dance born in the slave quarters of the Brazilian Northeast and spread to the cities of the coast, especially Salvador da Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. Samba had its beginning among the slave population of Bahia, having been imported in a varied form from Angola. It flourished in the social milieu of the freed persons during the early decades of the 20th century after the abolition of slavery in 1888. In the favelas and working-class neighborhoods that cropped up in the expanding urban centers, blacks came together in private parties and outdoor bars, affectionately called botéquims, to play music on their assortment of homemade instruments. Most of these instruments were passed down from the time of slavery into the communities of freed persons. They had been fashioned from found objects and scrap materials.

The blocos, a loose network of street musicians and dancers, were the precursors to the modern samba schools. They continue today, ranging from young boys such as these in Salvador, to the famous Bloco de Ipanema in Rio de Janeiro, that hundreds of revelers join during the Carnival season. (Photograph by Erich Goode)

The dominant feature of these parties was the roda de samba, an arrangement of samba dancers in a circle, swaying and stepping to a steady drumbeat, with at least one, and sometimes more than one, dancer in the middle. The dancers moved to the mesmerizing beat, while local composers chanted out verse after verse of an improvised refrain. The party, simply called a roda (circle), typically stretched from late evening until the next morning.

The first formal organization of samba dancers, singers, and instrumentalists formed in 1928. The organizers called it an escola de samba, or samba school. Most likely they chose this name as a way of establishing legitimacy for the dance and musical form by associating the concept of a dance hall with a school, a place of discipline, hard work, and learning. These clubs or schools became the foundation from which samba emerged as a major cultural force in all urban areas, but especially in Rio de Janeiro. The schools grew out of the loose network of revelers called blocos de sujo, literally “groups of dirty ones,” who paraded through the streets at Carnival time. In the 1930s, the blocos and other groups, often made up of several generations of extended families, began to come together in the samba schools. As a musical
form and popular entertainment, samba and the schools in which it was
centralized flourished in the back alleys and local botequins from the
late 1920s through the 1930s.

Carnival
The first recorded samba was “Pelo telefone” (On the Phone) which
was registered to a musician named Donga in 1917. Other musicians
added to the system of two-bar phrasing, slowed the tempo, and added
notes. The modern samba developed in the 1950s, and has been added
to by a host of well-known composers including Noel Rosa, Caninha,
Heitor do Pira, Ataulfo Alves, Geraldo Pereira, Lamartine Babo,
Braguinha, Dornival Caymmi, and Paulinho da Viola.

The rhythm is carried by a drum (the batucada) and many percussion
instruments that do not have names in English, including surdo,
tamborim, pandeiro, frigideira, chocalho. The music does not feature
brass instruments, although some have been introduced for a style that
imitates North American jazz, but there is often a guitar.

To the unstudied ear, samba can appear to be a single rhythmic song
and beat, but there are actually many variations that have developed
over the years and have been recorded by many of the best known sambistas.
In addition to the long-standing samba de brega (samba in which
the singer “breaks” into a dramatic story), samba de enredo (samba with
a theme, as in Carnival), samba de roda (samba in a circle with hand-
clapping), there have been recent additions that reflect international
influences. In the 1980s a samba tan-tan, featuring a banjo, became
popular, as did samba-reggae, influenced by West Indian music, samba
with “cool jazz” influences from the West Coast of the United States,
and samba rap, that incorporates American rap and hip-hop. As a musical
form samba itself continues to evolve and mutate as it comes into
contact with new musical trends and international influences.

As Afro-Brazilian musical culture grew, it attached itself to the pre-
Lenten parties that were a tradition among the Portuguese, Italian, and
other Catholic immigrants from Europe. The entrance of Afro-Brazilian
culture on the national scene was not welcomed by everyone from
the white elite and immigrant communities. In the face of a growing
Afro-descendant urban population in the 1920s, a backlash against
black culture took hold among some sectors of the white population.
The latter argued that blacks, most of whom were poor, lacked educa-
tion and skills as a result of slavery and were to blame for the nation’s
backwardness. This “blame the victim” syndrome gave rise to a number
of laws that sought to prohibit the practice of non-Christian religions
and any public expression of black music and dance. This prohibition
coincided with the efforts of immigration authorities to exclude where
possible, and otherwise actively discourage, nonwhite immigrants from
entering the country.

The practice of African religious cults of candomblé, umbanda, and
macumba was driven underground and police informers infiltrated the
rodas de samba and rounded up participants when a party or street
dance began. In one case, a black actor practicing a play that featured a
candomblé scene was arrested in his boardinghouse after being turned
in by his neighbor who accused him of practicing witchcraft. In histori-
an and political commentator Alison Raphael’s study of samba in Rio de Janeiro she reports that an elderly black man claimed that
“it was enough to be seen walking with a tambourine under your arm
to be beaten and arrested by the police.” (Brazil Herald, January
30/31,1977)

Despite this harassment, in the early 1930s, the samba schools
were officially recognized as participants in the citywide Carnival fest-
ivities. The mainly black and poor sambistas, organized in the samba
schools, joined the citywide party dominated by the mainstays of
Carnival: the grandes sociedade, or great societies. The grandes socie-
dades were clubs made up of the city’s most affluent residents, busi-
nessmen, and professionals. On the Sunday before Ash Wednesday,
some of the most prominent citizenry dressed in elaborate costumes
and paraded through the streets either perched on top of or walking
alongside richly festooned floats. Drawing on direct or indirect gov-
ernment connections, the elite societies garnered substantial funds to
help defray their expenses.

By contrast, the samba schools received no subsidies and their
members lacked any sources of cash beyond a few contributions to
pay for floats, costumes, or musical instruments. As a result, school
members sewed their own costumes, created instruments, and deco-
rated floats with found materials. Relying on the skills of local crafts-
men, seamstresses, and a host of volunteers, preparations for Carnival
involved a massive effort, turning the months and weeks before
Carnival into a frenzied outpouring of cooperation and recreation in
the city’s poor neighborhoods. In fact, it was this sense of community
that would be lost in later years as the samba schools garnered more
attention, drew on more lucrative resources for funds, and began to
engage in fierce competition to win prizes and acclaim as the top
schools of the season.
Official Recognition of the Samba Schools

In 1933, President Getúlio Vargas officially recognized the samba schools. Vargas's recognition of the schools can be seen as a part of his overall policy of winning the loyalty of the urban working classes and poor. In addition, legalizing the samba schools contributed to Vargas's strategy of unifying the country's citizens around a nationalist and populist base in support of his political goals. Once the schools were officially authorized, they became subject to greater government scrutiny and censorship. Recognition was not, however, a single top-down process. As anthropologist Hermano Vianna points out, official acceptance was the culmination of years of give-and-take, when respect frequently alternated with dismissal, before the mainstream audience eventually embraced the samba schools as the mainstay of Carnival.

The samba schools began to employ skilled professionals to design the floats and costumes. They vied for the best choreographers to arrange intricate samba routines. The samba schools began to enjoy a heightened prestige, sambistas attained celebrity status around the country, and the process of mounting the elaborate productions became less of a financial burden on the shantytown dwellers. At the same time the schools' relationship with the residents of their local neighborhoods grew more remote. The community spirit that had united the poor Afro-Brazilian population and had been responsible for launching the early parades and the rodas increasingly waned as samba lost touch with its roots.

Before they were admitted to the yearly Carnival, the schools had to register with the police and obtain a license to parade. In addition, the government required that the schools' enredo (theme) and the float reflect a page out of Brazilian history or depict a famous historical personality. Vargas's intention was to use Carnival, just as he was using other mediums such as national education, social welfare, and political discourse, to construct a unified nation-state. Carnival was just one part, albeit an important one because of its widespread popularity with all social classes, of the president's overall plan to forge a national consciousness and national unity out of the loosely knit federation of states that had characterized Brazil from the colonial period through the First Republic.

Carnival and National Identity

The Carnival themes increasingly celebrated national development and progress. Getúlio Vargas's goal of building national unity through an accelerated plan of increased production and industrial efficiency relied on a unified workforce with a single national identity. Vargas's vision of Brazilian identity included Afro-Brazilian culture. The legitimacy of the Afro-Brazilian samba schools, therefore, served as a powerful centerpiece for the promotion of a new racial ideology. Vargas pointed to the importance of samba and Carnival to show that Brazil had escaped the ravages of racism that separated people in the United States and elsewhere. To stem the effects of racial antagonism, Vargas envisioned Carnival as a place in which the heroic efforts of both blacks and white immigrant workers stood at the apex of Brazil's "racial paradise." A 1941 article stated that one of the "most characteristic features of Brazilian democratic formation is the non-existence among us of racial prejudice." A government publication in 1942 explicitly linked this egalitarian racial philosophy to Vargas's vision of Carnival. It proclaimed, "samba has come down from the morro to the paved streets of the city. . . . The personalities of our songs today bring their activity to bear in our factories and shops." (Vianna 1999:91–92)

As with all popular culture, Carnival themes have fluctuated to reflect changes in the nation's broader political reality. In the 1970s and 1980s, samba de enredos celebrated the famous rebellions of Brazil's past, such as Canudos and Palmares, adding not-so-veiled calls for
The legitimization of the samba schools under Getúlio Vargas’s presidency continued after his death. The samba schools moved from the margins to the center of Carnival celebrations. Professional artists and choreographers replaced amateur artisans as the schools began to compete for the favor, prestige, and cash prizes accorded the best floats, music, and dance routines. Carnival transformed into a performance in which the mainly black and mulatto poor people paraded before mainly white tourists and wealthy Brazilians who looked on from spectator stands.

In 1963, Rio’s tourism authorities began to sell tickets for the best seats in the prime locations to tourist agencies who in turn used them to attract not only tourists but international personalities from abroad. The price of admission to any seat in the grand stand rose to a level unattainable for all but the affluent. Record companies began to market the samba-enedos (songs) on the airwaves and in records sold abroad. Brazilian singers and TV and media stars paraded with the most prestigious samba schools.

At every turn samba became a commercial enterprise, pitting the old neighborhood groups into fierce competition with each other in order to pay for the expensive costumes, professional expertise, and advanced recording equipment. Finally, in the 1980s the Carnival parade was moved into a 10-block long staging ground in central Rio.

In a process that began in the 1930s and has continued since, the samba schools have been instrumental in integrating, especially, Carioca (or Rio) society and providing a cultural symbol for all Brazil. Black sambistas began to enjoy widespread fame and acceptance as the samba, initially feared and relegated to the margins of society, came increasingly into style. One man commented: “When I saw, in 1933, that parade of black people, with the crowd clapping for our sambas, I realized that the black man is important for Brazil.” (Brazil Herald, February 13/14, 1977) Since Afro-descendant Brazilians comprised key segments of the workforce, governmental declarations of racial accord and respect for workers did win Vargas support among the working class. However, words, even songs, parades, and dances, no matter how popular with white tourists, upper- and middle-class Brazilians, could not erase widespread discrimination and class inequality.

By the 1940s and 1950s, Carnival emerged as a major Brazilian tourist attraction and source of both foreign and domestic revenue. The
The Sambódromo, as the area is called, can accommodate the international tourist, upper- and middle-class Brazilians, and the media, far from the threat of pickpockets and street beggars, even isolated from much of the real city. Whereas Carnival has become a parade of spectators far detached from the neighborhood people who are yet the heart and soul of samba, parties in the samba schools and local clubs located in the poorest areas of the city still dominate the social scene.

Carnival and Gender Roles
Carnival also projects a different sexual aesthetic. At its core, the pre-Lenten parties have always been a time to throw aside for a short while the constraints of engendered behavior. Carnival in Brazil features men dressed as women, and perhaps plays more decidedly than any of the other celebrations in the Caribbean and the United States on gender categories. Carnival showcases two sexual sensibilities. On the one hand, the majority of men who participate are “ordinary married men dressed in drag, flaunting jewelry and finery borrowed from their sisters, mothers, and girlfriends in order to engage in three days of uninhibited revelry.” (Green 1999:1) These groups of middle-class (presumably heterosexual) boys and men turn out for street dances and roam the buses and public plazas dressed as elaborately bosomed, wigged, and made-up women.

Another sexual sensibility is equally ubiquitous, as any observer of Carnival can testify. Carnival, especially in Rio de Janeiro, is also a “public forum for both humorous and serious manifestations of gay pride.” (Green 1999:2) Carnival festivities include large transvesti parties, gigantic street and ballroom celebrations for the international gay community that converges on Rio de Janeiro and Salvador da Bahia for the yearly celebrations. (Transvesti translates literally as “transvestite” but the media uses it to refer to the “drag queen” contingent of the samba-school parade. It was used to refer to male homosexuals until the more common English-language term gay came into use in the 1980s.) Tourist brochures from Rio’s official tourist agency distributed in major cities of the world invite gay tourists to partake in Rio’s Carnival celebration.

A particular feature of gay pride can be seen in the bandas. Bandas are contingents of dancers, musicians, and assorted revelers who take to the streets of local neighborhoods and perform throughout the city in the days before Carnival. In 1984, the Banda de Carmen Miranda split off from Rio’s most famous street revelers, the Banda de Ipanema. The Banda de Carmen Miranda, named for Rio’s most famous international celebrity, was formed by gay men who adopted Carmen Miranda, long an icon of gay culture in Brazil and abroad, as their symbol.

In the hot summer months from the beginning of the year until the start of Lent in late February or March, Carnival tacks traditional gender roles, brings the rich and poor into the same celebration, and celebrates the African soul of Brazil’s music. The week of Carnival celebration, especially the last three days, when it reaches its most frenzied level, overturns the traditional race, gender, and class hierarchies. When Carnival ends, however, things go back to how they were. Although there are active and visible gay and lesbian communities in many cities, most Brazilians are homophobic, or at least not particularly accepting of gay sexuality. Racially, whites hold dominant positions in society, and people of European ancestry enjoy the highest economic status. Carnival, therefore, is a kind of cultural “time-out,” when fixed social conventions turn upside down. For a week or more one can hear the pulsating beat of the batucada drum ring out from the hillside favelas as the sounds of samba envelope the nation in uniquely Brazilian celebration.
Bossa Nova and Other Musical Genres

In the 1950s, a new type of samba, called bossa nova, spread from Brazil to the United States and Europe. It was popularized in the United States by Frank Sinatra and immortalized in the English version of the song "A garota de Ipanema," or "The Girl from Ipanema." Recorded by Brazilian artists João Gilberto and Antônio Carlos Jobim, the song became an international hit and is today said to be among the top five most recorded songs in music history. Bossa nova was pop in some hands, and jazz in others.

In the 1970s and 1980s, music began to play an important role as a tool for opposing the conformity of the military government. Artists such as Milton Nascimento, Gilberto Gil, Chico Buarque, Maria Bethânia, and Caetano Veloso played with words and themes in songs as a way of resisting the military censors, extolling the African roots of Brazil's culture, and celebrating the hardworking and oppressed rural and urban workers. These artists, many of whom had been in exile for a time in the late 1960s and early 1970s, had met up with and learned from musicians abroad. They saw their music as linked with the international struggles for civil rights in the United States, for the goals of youths throughout the world, and especially with the struggle for freedom in much of Latin America.

There are critics who argue that the current generation of Brazilian youth is more pessimistic than its 1960s and 1970s predecessors, that they have retreated from rebellion into nihilism. It would be dangerous to draw this conclusion on the basis of a few songs, but it is true that a strain of pessimism runs through Brazilian rock in particular. Whether that is any different from the refrains in rap and hip-hop in North America and Europe would be hard to say.

The Brazilian anthropologist Hermano Viana argues in his study of popular music that the vision of Brazil contained in modern rock lyrics is "unashamedly pessimistic." (Vianna 1999:99). A popular 1980s song, "What Country Is This?" by Legiao Urbana, proclaimed, "In the favelas, in the senate, filth is everywhere." The band, Paralamas do Sucesso shout out in their song "Perplexed" that Brazilians are "unemployed, cleaned out, without even a place to drop dead, indebted without a way to pay, this country, this country that someone called ours." In "Brazil" the singer Cazuza declares, "Great insignificant country, I'll never betray you." The band Ultraje a Rigor in its darkly titled song "Useless," rolls the lost generation of youth into the national image: "We don't know how to choose a president, we can't take care of ourselves, we can't even brush our teeth, we borrow money and then can't pay, we are useless." (quoted in Vianna, 1977:101) By contrast, however, an infectious optimism and racial inclusiveness is still apparent in some areas. The beat and refrains of the blocos afros such as Olodum, popularized in North America by the musician Paul Simon, reflects a more positive and upbeat reality.

Although there is an official police presence at some of the funk parties, which regularly attract from a few hundred to thousands of revelers, the most common source of surveillance is provided by the local bosses, many of them in drug and crime cartels, from the favela itself. Given the known corruption in urban police forces, however, one could not say there would be a discernible difference between policing provided by the local favela boss and that of the police. Brazil's police are known to draw a steady income from payoffs from crime syndicates.

Benedita da Silva, who grew up in one of Rio's largest slums and serves in the senate, offers an optimistic appraisal of the funk phenomenon. Commenting on the parties that dominate the square in her favela, she estimated that 80 percent of those who frequent the dances are "kids slumming in the favelas. You see them come here in their cars or fancy motorcycles. Some people think that funk is associated with delinquency and encourage the police to ban funk dances. A lot of the better-off parents don't like their kids going to the favelas." Da Silva offered an interesting contrast to the complaints expressed in the newspaper regarding the mixing of social classes at the parties. "I remember a letter a mother wrote to the newspaper complaining that thanks to funk, 'my children now think that poverty is beautiful and that the favelas are wonderful places.' But I think it's really healthy to bring the youth of different classes together. The more we understand each other's realities, the better." (Benjamin and Mendonça 1997:39-40).

As reported frequently in newspaper accounts, the attraction of middle-class youths to the funk dances provided a steady source of income to favelados employed to watch over the sleek automobiles and motorcycles during the course of the evening. Along with providing drinks, collecting admissions at the door, and employing bouncers and others to maintain order and, commonly, to enforce a prohibition against overt sexual acts on the dance floor, the funk parties bring revenue to the poorest part of Rio society. Nonetheless, the funk parties are under the control of the crime syndicates that operate freely in the favelas. In 2002, a well-known journalist was executed, reputedly by drug gangs, for his role in uncovering the links between drug traffickers, the managers of the funk parties, and the police.
Soccer, a Brazilian Mania

Writing in 1949 in A Gazeta newspaper, a Brazilian journalist compared the British and Brazilian approaches to soccer, or futebol: “English football requires that the ball move faster than the player; Brazilian football requires that the player be faster than the ball.” Regarding the mania to win, he noted that the “Englishman goes on the field disposed either to win or to lose; the Brazilian either to win, or to blame the referee.” (Mazzoni, quoted in Mason 1995:119)

Soccer is the most popular sport in the world and the long-standing favorite in most Latin American countries. The reason soccer holds such a dominant place in Brazilian culture, at least among men, is probably because it has so few rivals. Soccer is Brazil’s most popular national sport, but it is also just about the only one. It is the game nearly every Brazilian boy plays from the time he can run and kick. In later years it is the game most Brazilian males will watch, dissect, and follow with almost religious fervor for most of their lives.

Origins of Soccer in Brazil

The game of soccer was brought to many South American countries in the latter half of the 19th century by British sailors who played pickup games while on shore leave. Buenos Aires in Argentina, Montevideo in Uruguay, and Santos in Brazil were some of the port cities where soccer began to be played. An Englishman named Charles Miller is thought to have introduced organized soccer to Brazil. The son of Paulista merchants, Miller had been sent to England for his education and returned to São Paulo in 1894. He brought back two soccer balls with him. Miller organized a couple of teams made up of young British employees of the Gas Company, the London and Brazilian bank, and the São Paulo Railway Company. They played their first game in 1895. Shortly after this, the São Paulo Athletic Club, formed in 1888 as a British cricket club, added futebol to its sports.

In subsequent years, futebol spread to members of the elite Brazilian society. One tale has it that American Methodist missionaries brought basketballs to their school, but the young men, having been exposed to soccer, used the ball as a soccer ball. In addition, a German immigrant to Brazil in 1897 brought with him not only soccer balls but also the rules to the game, as played in Germany at that time. Soccer began to be played in the German gymnastic club and from there spread to members of the immigrant community. By 1910, soccer had been picked up by many members of the Brazilian elite and was being

played in nearly all the private academies in the European expatriate community.

Competition became more commonplace, and soon enough clubs had emerged in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to establish intense rivalries among themselves. Some of the most respected soccer clubs, Fluminense, Botafogo, America, International, and AC São Paulo, began to compete publicly. For the most part, the clubs were elite organizations: Players were known to travel to matches in dinner jackets and to celebrate afterwards with fine banquets, indulgences that the vast majority of Brazilians could never afford. A history of Brazilian soccer by Tony Mason notes that in the early years futebol matches were social occasions where young men from the best families came together to display their masculine qualities, generally in front of the admiring eyes of young women.

One of the few non-elite clubs, Bangu, formed in 1904. It was organized by the British owner of the Bangu textile mill, located in a working-class district in the north of Rio de Janeiro. The sport was intended to be a diversion for the British managers, who were soon joined by the mill workers, who proved to be superior practitioners. Before long, the club was far more important an enterprise than was the factory. Similar clubs for railway workers, mill workers, and other workers developed. Although the elite clubs shunned these new organizations, and even refused to play them, the sport had wrested loose from the confines of the European expatriates and had begun to germinate among Brazilian society as a whole.

Because futebol is organized around clubs, and a city such as Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo can have dozens of clubs, fans’ loyalties are tied to clubs, many of which have grown out of specific communities and reflect the class and social status of those communities. In São Paulo, for example, Palmeiras was founded by Italian immigrants, the descendants of whom still run it. Palmeiras is thought to hold the loyalties of the large Italian community. The São Paulo club holds the allegiance of middle-class Paulistas, while Corinthians is known for the loyalty of the lower class. In Rio de Janeiro, Fluminense still is seen as the club of the high-status white families, while Flamengo is the team of the poor blacks and mulattos, and Botafogo has the following of the Rio middle class. Obviously these are not firm lines of demarcation, since fans switch their loyalties depending often on the success or failure of the teams. But as with Mets and Yankees baseball fans in New York, or Cubs and White Sox fans in Chicago, long-standing affections tend to persist.
From time to time various political entities have exploited this link between diverse social groups and *futebol*. This was possible because *futebol* established itself in Brazil, as well as in other places in South America, as a rivalry not between cities but between clubs, often within a city. As a result politicians used the *futebol* club as a local base, in much the same way machine politicians have always drawn on local neighborhood institutions such as churches, union halls, and ethnic meeting halls. The *futebol* club, and support for it, was a base on which politicians could build their popularity and eventually their careers.

For decades, many of the clubs assumed that their close ties to politicians protected them from scrutiny. That may no longer be the case. In 2001 President Cardoso changed the clubs’ status from social organizations to “commercial enterprises,” thereby subjecting them to fiscal and legal oversight. Subsequently the government and sports federation began uncovering widespread incidences of money laundering, tax evasion, fraud, and multiple financial abuses in the soccer clubs.

**Politicians and Futebol**

No politician exploited the link between soccer and the national psyche as did Getúlio Vargas. Under Vargas in the 1930s, *futebol* began to achieve its standing as a national pastime. Similar to what he had done with *samba* and Carnival, Vargas sought to use soccer as a way of unifying the nation, creating a common source of identity, and developing a single national culture. And as had happened with *samba*, this meant discrediting the racist notions that kept black and mulatto Brazilian players from competing widely. In 1941, he established the National Council of Sports as a part of the Ministry of Education and Culture. His goal was not only to solidify soccer as a key component of popular culture, but also to establish the nation’s reputation abroad as a leading contender in South American soccer play. In the last years of his presidency Vargas arranged for the prestigious Rio club, Flamengo, to build a 24-story-high office building overlooking the bay.

The military dictatorship that came to power in 1964 sought to gain legitimacy by supporting soccer clubs and backing the construction of soccer stadiums throughout the country. New stadiums dotted the urban landscape from Belém in the North, Recife and Salvador in the impoverished Northeast, Fortaleza and Pôrto Alegre in the South, as well as in large and small cities in between. The generals, unpopular with the Brazilian citizenry, tried to use *futebol* as a link with the masses by proclaiming their allegiance to various soccer teams and making regular appearances at games. From 1969 until 1975 13 new stadiums were built in cities throughout the country; by 1978 seven of the world’s largest stadiums were in Brazil.

Following in Vargas’ footsteps, the dictators sought to tie *futebol* to the military’s nationalist program. *Futebol* was used as a way of swaying the electorate. Critics claimed that the military’s ARENA party candidates fangled places for teams in the national championship playoffs in locales where the party was not doing well. As Mason’s study notes, “leading football personalities know that being a football person helps if you want to go into politics in Brazil and if you are a politician an interest in football is a real advantage.” (Mason 1995:62)

Observers in the early 1970s argued that the generals gained four years of peace after Brazil won the World Cup in 1970, and maybe lost it when the team was eliminated in 1974 in the competition in Rome. Beginning in 1974 the presidency of the ARENA party and the presidency of the Brazilian Sports Council (CBD) were both in the hands of Admiral Helio Nunes, a man who spent considerable energy trying to convince soccer superstar Pelé to play for Brazil in the 1974 Cup. Pelé refused, presumably for no more political reason than that he had signed a multimillion-dollar contract with Pepsi to promote soccer in the United States.

Ironically, in the 1980s the powerful trade unions in São Paulo and other industrial cities began to draw such huge crowds of demonstrators in opposition to the military government’s labor policies that they had nowhere large enough to meet except in the gigantic soccer stadiums. In the 1989 presidential campaign, the Workers Party rallied its supporters in packed soccer stadiums where Lula and other candidates called for an end to military rule.

The four-year cycle of World Cup matches has coincided frequently with Brazil’s national elections. David Fleischer of *Brazil Focus* discounts any particular connection between the events, but does note that 1950, 1994, 1998, and 2002 were all presidential election years as well as historic Cup games. In 1950, Brazil lost to tiny neighboring Uruguay in a final still referred to as a “national disaster,” only worsened because it was played in Rio’s Maracanã stadium. In 1998 Brazil suffered its most humiliating defeat in the Cup final against France, and then in 1994 and 2002 it won.

**Pelé**

Brazilian soccer achieved its greatest popularity in the 1960s, and it was very much due to the skill of one player: Pelé. Born Edson
Arantes do Nascimento on October 23, 1940, Pelé is from a small town in Minas Gerais. His father was a semiprofessional soccer player who made his living as a warehouse worker. Pelé began to play on the dirt lots in his neighborhood at a young age. It was while he was a member of a local team that played without shoes that he was given the name “Pelé.” No one, including Pelé, knows precisely where the name came from, but at least in the beginning, it was not a name the young player liked.

Pelé’s talent was apparent, and at the age of 15 he began playing with men on a semiprofessional team. By his mid-twenties he was recognized as one of the best players in Brazil. He played in international competitions throughout the 1960s, including three World Cups, and became known as the best player in the sport, possibly of all time. There are several reasons why Pelé was so good. In the first place, he was a natural soccer player. His coach on the Santos team, for which he played throughout his Brazilian career, stated that Pelé possessed “all the qualities of the ideal football player. He is fast on the ground and in the air, he has the physique, the kick, the ball control, the ability to play, a feeling for the manoeuvre, he is unselfish, good natured and modest.” (Mason 1995:87) Commenting on Pelé’s feats in the second World Championship final in Lisbon, the Italian sportswriter covering the event wrote that spectators were left “openmouthed at the complete athletic prowess of this young man.” (Mason 1995:87)

Not only did Pelé have great skill, his body seemed impervious to the punishing blows and kicks of the fiercest competitors. And he was tireless. For 14 years he played 60 to 100 matches a year. By the time he left for the United States in 1975 to play with the newly formed Cosmos soccer team, he had played 1,254 games. The hard work did have its rewards. In 1963 he was the highest-paid professional athlete in the world, drawing more than $200,000. Some 10 years later he was paid $7 million when he signed for the Cosmos in the United States.

Pelé’s importance to Brazilian history is far beyond the personal success he achieved. His rise to international fame and riches from the poverty of a small town in an interior state was more of a “Brazilian miracle” than any of the successes touted by the military government during the same period. Possibly the greatest player in a game that captures the attention of most sports spectators in the world, Pelé’s international celebrity ranks with Muhammad Ali’s and outstrips that of many of history’s world-famous sports figures.

By the time Pelé retired in 1977, he had been declared a national treasure of the Brazilian government. He had been the first black man to appear on the cover of Life magazine. He had played in Brazil for the queen of England in a special match, and while in England the duke of Edinburgh broke with royal tradition by going to Pelé and extending his greeting first instead of waiting for the latter to approach him, as called for by royal protocol. When Pelé played in France in 1971, a minister of the government met him at the airport and shepherded him through Paris in an open motorcade through streets lined with thousands of cheering fans. It was a welcome France usually reserved for visiting heads of state. In the mid-1970s, competing sides in the Nigerian civil war negotiated a cease-fire when the Santos team played there, so that everyone could watch this genius of soccer play. In 1977, Pelé was given a special reception at the United Nations for his work in helping the children of the world, and President Jimmy Carter paid tribute to Pelé for the “thrills he gave the fans of this nation and the dimension he added to American sports.” (Carter quoted in Mason 1995:93)
Finally, in June 2008, at the age of 67, Pelé headlined the Goal 4 Africa international soccer match in honor of South African Nobel Prize winner and former president Nelson Mandela, on the occasion of the latter's 90th birthday. The match was one of many held around the world to raise funds for African education. Pelé broke barriers as a both a black man and as an individual from a poor Latin American country. He put not only soccer on the world map but Brazil as well.

**Twenty-First Century Soccer**

A recent contribution to international soccer fame is Ronaldo Luís Nazario da Lima (born 1976). Similar to Pelé, Ronaldo is considered one of the best players in the sport's history, having been named best world player in 1996 and 1997. In 2002 Cup competition he tied Pelé’s record of 12 goals in 14 games.

Despite a lackluster performance in 2006 when he was booed for showing up overweight at the run-up to the Cup competition, Ronaldo set a new world record of 15 goals in World Cup play. Ronaldo paid tribute to Pelé as he basked in the glory of the 2002 World Cup victory, crediting Pelé with offering advice and encouragement when the younger player was plagued with repeated injuries over the previous two years.

A key difference in Ronaldo's career from Pelé's is that Ronaldo does not play for a Brazilian club. Like Pelé, Ronaldo attracted the attention of scouts as a young player, but unlike his predecessor, Ronaldo did not continue to play for his club in Belo Horizonte. Ronaldo moved to Europe, where he has competed mainly in Italy and Spain. Pelé, by contrast, played for Santos his entire career, until he left to join the Cosmos. Indeed, almost no member of Brazil's victorious 2002 World Cup team lived and competed in Brazil. This pattern is repeated throughout Latin America and Africa, where many local teams cannot compete with the salaries and advertising deals offered to players in Europe and the United States. The best players return to their homelands simply to play on their nation's World Cup team every four years.

Brazil's latest star in the world soccer pantheon is Marta Vieira da Silva, considered the best and most electrifying player in the game. Marta's rise to fame has paralleled other soccer sensations in breaking through economic and national barriers, while adding gender to the mix. From a modest single-parent family in a small interior town that lacked any soccer teams, much less one for girls, Marta learned to play with boys on the street. At the age of 14, she traveled on a bus for three days to Rio de Janeiro, where, through a tenuous family connection, she won a tryout for the national team. She never returned to her distant hometown. Dubbed the best female player in the world for three years running (2006–2009), Marta plays for Sol, the Los Angeles–based women's soccer team. Marta's Brazil-based agent, Fabiano Farah, also represents Ronaldo, as well as other leading male players, but the young woman is most often compared to Pelé for her dazzling footwork, speed, and unbridled enthusiasm for the game.

**Television and Telenovelas**

The telenovela is one of the most widespread expressions of popular culture in Latin America. Similar to the soap opera, which some consider its North American distant cousin, the telenovela, examines personal and familial themes. Plots revolve around power relations in work and domestic settings, bad women and competition between women for the attentions of men, or rivalries between two men for the favor of a woman. They include sacrifice combined with either success or failure, mercenary marriages, and controversies over paternity. According to sociologist José Antonio Guevara, the typical theme of the telenovela is the struggle to found a traditional family: falling in love, marrying, having children. It pursues this theme by showing the contrasting lives of rich and poor, good and evil. From this tension the melodrama develops its plot, which is based on a projection of reality.

By contrast, the North American soap opera takes place in an artificial upper-class and upper-middle-class society. The central tension of the soap opera generally involves money and sex, and the complications endured in holding on to both in the face of competitors. Structurally, the soap opera and telenovela also differ. There is no final episode to the soap opera (unless it goes off the air), since the events with which its characters struggle never end and cannot be solved. For the telenovela, on the other hand, the goal is to solve the problems of society, to even teach a way to resolve the contradictions and tensions inherent in the progress of human events. The plot reaches its culmination in three to four months of daily episodes. The final episode presents a happy resolution to the problems faced in the series. Finally, soap operas are shown in the daytime and largely attract a female audience. The telenovela shows at night, and is the main source of entertainment for many men, women, and the whole family.

According to most studies of TV viewing in Latin America, the telenovela is the main source of support for many television channels.
and the basic staple of both daytime and evening programming. The modern telenovela traces its origins to Cuban radionovelas in the 1930s, which soon became the standard for all of Latin America. The serial radio programs were inexpensive to produce because they repeated (and perfected) the same broad storyline, generally involving two main characters and three or four secondary figures. The radionovela gave way to the telenovela, first in Mexico and then throughout the continent, as television became more available in the 1960s.

The Brazilian Novela

For a couple of reasons, the popularity of the telenovela grew during the era of the military dictatorship after 1964. In the first place, the repressive nighttime curfew drove underground many public forms of entertainment. The regime governed through decrees, prohibited the assembly of more than 10 people in a public place, and policed the streets at night to ensure that potential dissidents could not make contact with one another. In this vacuum, Brazilians developed the routine of watching the telenovelas that dominated the airwaves from 6 to 10 P.M. There is still a tendency to refer to specific shows according to their time slot rather than by names, a practice that emerged during the military government. People will speak of "the 6:00 novela" or the "8:00 novela."

Second, the state supported the development of a national TV network, Rede Globo, and conferred many financial favors on the private owners. Under the leadership of the archconservative Roberto Marinho, a strong supporter of the military dictatorship, TVs were made accessible to even the poorest Brazilians. The formula was quite simple. There was little competition, thus advertising rates were held to a minimum. In addition, a black-and-white TV was available to most Brazilian families individually or in a neighborhood, while TV Globo and its closest competitor, TV Manchete, filled the airwaves with a steady stream of fantasy.

TV Globo is Brazil's most important media monopoly, with 32 affiliates. The network garners an estimated 70 percent of the advertising and about 35 percent of the audience in the prime-time slot. Every night it broadcasts three different novelas to an estimated 40–50 million viewers, out of a possible audience of around 85 million. Nighttime programs appear well on three other competing networks, but they trail far behind TV Globo in both the quality and expense of their programs, and their share of the audience.

While TV Globo continues to dominate the novela market, Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão (SBT) has begun to carve inroads. SBT's founder

Silvio Santos is a rags-to-riches media mogul who started out selling on the streets of Rio. He turned a street hawking enterprise into a network of retail stores that sold lottery prizes on the installment plan. With occasional forays into national politics, including a brief flirtation with the 2002 presidential campaign, Silvio Santos is proving to be an important figure in the Brazilian political spotlight. As a result of his aggressive business tactics, SBT has captured a share of the television-viewing audience by showing game shows imported from the United States and Europe. SBT also features dubbed Mexican telenovelas which, while not as original as those broadcast on TV Globo, are much less expensive to produce. Moreover, the novela audience is so vast that even Mexican knockoffs can find an audience.

Although telenovelas are wildly popular throughout Latin America, the Brazilian variant is the most original, is considered the most risqué, even lurid, and holds the greatest market share of its respective audience. Brazil's novelas are lavishly produced melodramas, written exclusively for the TV audience by some of the nation's major writers. In addition to melodramas, the shows are sometimes comedies, raise social criticism, and retell major works of fiction or history. They feature Brazil's best actors, including top movie actors in starring roles and guest appearances. Whereas Mexican or Colombian telenovelas might last for around four to six weeks, the Brazilian drama routinely extends to six months or more. Finally, the Brazilian shows are an important cultural export to the rest of Latin America, where the Spanish translation from the original Portuguese is shown to audiences throughout the continent.

Reasons for the Novelà's Popularity

There are many reasons why the novelas capture the imagination of so many Brazilians on a nightly basis. In the first place, this is a TV viewing nation. More households in Brazil have televisions than have refrigerators. The two leading newspapers in the country, the Folha de São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro's Jornal do Brasil, have a combined readership of about 300,000 people. Along with the other major newspapers, it is estimated that less than a million readers follow newspapers on a daily basis, while 50 million watch Jornal Nacional, the nightly news program aired on TV Globo. In a country where an estimated 70 percent of the population has no more than a sixth-grade education, where millions are illiterate, and more than half the population lives in poverty and goes hungry, the television is the single form of entertainment. As the Mexican commentator and journalist Alma Guillermoprieto has observed, "Telenovelas substitute for all the pleasures that most
Cinema

Although Brazilian cinema has a history stretching back to the early 20th century, its most famous film was, and possibly still is, *Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro)*, made in 1959 by a Frenchman, Marcel Camus. Drawn from Vinicius de Moraes’s play *Orfeu da Conceição*, adapted from the mythical Greek drama of Orpheus and Eurydice, the film introduced a world audience to Carnival, the beauty of Rio de Janeiro, the centrality of African ritual and belief in Brazil’s culture, and the bossa nova music of one of the nation’s most important artists, Antonio Carlos Jobim. The movie won the 1959 Palme d’Or at Cannes and the 1960 Academy Award for Best Foreign-Language Film. The film was a collaborative effort with Brazilian filmmakers, but the honors all went to France.

Carmen Miranda’s popularity in Hollywood films brought Brazil a minor degree of fame on the international stage during the 1930s and 1940s, along with a steady stream of domestic releases. At the end of the 20th century, and in the early decades of the 21st, several major Brazilian film directors won widespread acclaim both among domestic and international audiences for such films as *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands* (Bruno Barreto, 1976), *Bye Bye Brasil* (Caca Diegues, 1979), *Pixote* (Hector Babenco, 1981), *O Quatrilho* (Fabio Barreto, 1995), and *Central Station* (Walter Salles, 1998). *Pixote*, starring an actual boy from the favela, depicted the sordid underworld life of poverty. The movie won a number of international awards and established a kind of cinema verité trend that is apparent in recent, highly acclaimed releases such as *City of God* (Fernando Meirelles, Katia Lund, 2002), *Bus 174* (José Padilha, 2002), *Carandiru* (Hector Babenco, 2003), *Favela Rising* (Jeff Zimbalist and Matt Mochary, 2005), *The Elite Squad* (José Padilha, 2007), *Blindness* (Fernando Meirelles, 2008) and *Manda Bala*, 2007, the Documentary Grand Jury Prize winner at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival. While the films are all skillfully made, the fact that they all rely on graphic depictions of violence, in either documentary or documentary-like format, and show either a callous disregard for human life or the failure of the Brazilian state to control violence, has made them all controversial. Nonetheless, the films have earned Brazilians a place among the growing coterie of internationally acclaimed Latin American directors and actors.

It is samba, soccer, the nighttime melodramas, and movies, in addition to several million Orkut (Brazil’s counterpart to Facebook) users who troll the Internet to remain in touch with pop culture, that connect Brazilians with one another. These are cultural products that cut across class, race, and region to bind people together in a common nationality. They are the substance of Brazilian daily life, that which is debated in bars, listened to on the radio, discussed at the office water cooler. Moreover, a great share of the Brazilian economy revolves around the production, distribution, and consumption of these cultural entities. In all four cases, their popularity owes a great deal to the intervention of government and political figures, especially Getúlio Vargas. Official recognition, promotion, subsidies, and corporate sponsorships have brought these aspects of popular culture into the day-to-day lives of nearly all Brazilians.
10

BRAZIL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

These days there is no shortage of news and information on Brazil. In contrast to stories of beaches, Carnival, and Amazon adventures, or glum tales of crime, street children, and poverty, the news today has a more positive bent. A story on petroleum reserves and the haves and have-nots in the world of energy resources will invariably mention the Tupi oil fields, a huge discovery off the coast of Santos announced in November 2007. In January, 2008, Petrobras, the state-owned oil company, reported the discovery of Jupiter, a gigantic natural gas and light oil field, about 20 miles to the east of Tupi, with more discoveries to follow. The combination of Jupiter, Tupi, and other oil fields nearby has catapulted Brazil from a net oil importer to energy self-sufficiency, just as oil and gas prices skyrocketed. With an invitation to join the Oil Producing Exporting Countries (OPEC) a distinct possibility, Brazil is looking toward a future as energy self-sufficient and even as an exporter. Among Latin American countries, only Venezuela has membership in OPEC. An estimated yield of 5,000 to 8,000 barrels of oil a day adds to Brazil’s already ample supply of biofuels. As the second-largest producer of biofuel in the world, Brazil has since the late 1990s transformed the face of energy consumption, today managing almost half of internal transport on biofuel. As opposed to the expensive and inefficient corn ethanol produced in the United States, Brazil’s sugar-based ethanol can be grown widely and produced and refined more cheaply.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has tracked Brazil’s growth at above 5 percent for the last few years and projects modest prosperity and a $40 billion trade surplus in 2008. Nearly as fast as the United States moved from creditor to debtor status, Brazil moved in the other direction, chalking up respectable foreign reserves. Verification of Brazil’s move from “developing” to the status of major player came in April 2008 when Standard & Poor’s upgraded Brazil’s long-term foreign currency sovereign debt to investment grade. The move instantly drove stock prices for Brazilian companies to record highs, and São Paulo’s BOVESPA (Bolsa de Valores de São Paulo) Brazil’s major stock exchange, became one of the world’s top performing equity markets.

According to Zachary Levy of the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington D.C., Brazil’s elevation to investment grade indicates international confidence in the economy’s performance and the country’s ability to meet debt payments. Moreover, not only is Brazil itself investment grade, but Petrobras, likewise, has an investment-grade rating, and given the extensive oil and gas reserves, it promises to be an attractive investment option. Brazil now joins Chile, Mexico and, recently Peru, as good risks for international investments, which, combined with other positive indicators, have signaled a turnaround from a few years ago.

In the first four months of 2009, China surpassed the United States as Brazil’s largest trading partner. In a move indicative of the increasing commercial ties between the two nations, Beijing announced that China’s state-owned oil company, Sinopec, would provide up to $10 billion of financing to Petrobras over the next 10 years in exchange for 200,000 barrels of oil a day. The researcher Lilly Briger wrote on the Council on Hemispheric Affairs Web site that this agreement was all the more remarkable since it occurred during a period in which liquidity has all but evaporated from the global financial system. China’s move to finance the excavation of Brazil’s huge crude oil reserves signals a new cooperation between two emerging powerhouses, which Washington may find disconcerting. On the other hand, Brazil experienced a significant downturn in late 2008 as the worldwide recession that began in the United States and Europe reached Asia and Latin America. A shortage of credit and contraction in both industrial and consumer spending has slowed both production and trade in Brazil.

Ongoing social problems will no doubt get worse before they get better as economic growth stagnates. High crime rates, violence, corruption, pollution, and other effects of rapid industrialization and persistent poverty seem to drag the country from one crisis to another. More than 30 percent of the population lives in poverty, and the country’s per capita GDP is just $9,700. By comparison, Chile’s is $13,900 (18 percent in poverty), Argentina’s is $13,300 (24 percent in poverty), and Mexico’s is $12,800 (14 percent in poverty). On the other hand, it is also a nation of very vibrant, artistic, active, creative, and combative people who have forged one of the most interesting cultures in the Americas. Many tour-
ists and scholars from outside the country who spend time in Brazil come away with memories of a warm and generous people who enjoy life despite the many hardships they face and who have made extraordinarily creative contributions to the world of literature, music, dance, art, movies, television, and more. It seems at times that Brazilians are a people who play hard on the soccer field and dance floor, as they do also in the political arena and in the struggle to make a better life. Furthermore, they always seem immensely proud of being Brazilian, even if there are things about their homeland they would like to see changed.

The People Make the Country
Brazilian pride derives from the knowledge that theirs is a place of tenacious people and indefatigable heroes and heroines. Benedita da Silva (1943–), an illiterate black woman from one of the poorest neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro, learned as an adult to read and write and was elected to the national Senate. Da Silva's is a story similar to that of Lula, who rose from a metalworker and union leader to two-term president. Another hero, Francisco “Chico” Alves Mendes Filho (1944–88), a rubber tapper from remote Acré, achieved worldwide prominence as an articulate spokesman for the rubber tappers union and for a policy of sustainable development of the jungle. For his success, and the international attention he drew to the environmental cause in Brazil, he was slain in 1988 by the mercenaries of local landlords. Another notable case is that of Archbishop Hélder Câmara (1909–99) from the distant state of Ceará. His life trajectory moved from a youth member of the fascist Ação Integralista Brasileira to being ordained a priest and establishing himself in Rio de Janeiro as one of the foremost proponents of Catholic Action and liberation theology. When he was named archbishop of Olinda and Recife in Pernambuco, he used his office to criticize the military government after the 1964 coup. While in Paris in 1969, the archbishop publicly condemned the practice of torture in Brazil. In response, the military government prohibited any mention of Dom Hélder or his work in the media. As a highly public advocate of benefits to the poor, restraints on the military, and democratic rights for all citizens, Dom Hélder inspired many Brazilians. He was a man of privilege who became the champion of the less fortunate.

From the life histories of Benedita da Silva, Chico Mendes, Dom Hélder Câmara, and President da Silva, one can draw a picture of a society in which rigidity no longer prevails. Brazilian history is one of many twists and turns, many contradictions and conflicts.

The Workers Party in Power
Consideration of Brazil's position at the start of the 21st century begins with a look back at the road the nation has traveled in the last decade. On the political front, Lula's victories in the presidential races of 2002 and 2006 strengthened the reform agenda, although the PT lost some of its moral high ground because of corruption scandals. In the presidential election of 2002, the first round, held on October 6, winnowed the field of eight candidates to a run-off between Lula and the Social Democrat candidate, José Serra. President Cardoso's designated heir. In the second round, Lula defeated Serra by a margin of more than 20 percent and brought with him a majority in the Chamber of Deputies, which holds 513 seats elected proportionally from the 26 states and federal district. In the Senate, the PT garnered 14 of the 81 seats (three senators represent each state and the federal district), making it not the largest party, but one of the top three, and in a position to broker alliances with smaller leftist and progressive parties.

The PT victory in 2002 indicated that Brazilian voters were unmoved by a storm of unfavorable publicity that a potential left-wing triumph generated in the U.S. press. When in April 2002 Lula polled a favorable rating of greater than 40 percent, the reaction from Wall Street bankers and investors was swift. Several investment houses issued warnings that a Lula victory would be harmful to Brazil's "risk rating" and could increase the interest rate the big banks charge on loans. (As shown in the current investment-grade rating, discussed at the start of this chapter, the gloomy forecast was completely false.) Actually, the warning may have produced the opposite effect in Brazil. A member of the Chamber of Deputies sharply rebuked the Morgan Stanley investment house for its gloomy prognosis, and comments from both Morgan Stanley and Merrill Lynch investors came under immediate fire from the Cardoso government. Such interference from foreign creditors may have backfired and served only to galvanize Lula's supporters. The memory of overt foreign intervention in Brazilian affairs lingered in the minds of many voters, and even Lula's opponents did not want to appear as though they were beholden to Washington's financial interests. In the months prior to the election, Lula worked to moderate his message. Much to the dismay of many PT activists, he chose José Alencar, a textile manufacturer and well-known conservative with ties to the evangelical Christian right, as his running mate.

In his first year in office, Lula devoted himself to reformulating the complex and unequal tax code, streamlining the civil service pension system (unsettling PT supporters among public employees and university professors who had benefited from the government's generous pension
plan), and continuing to hold down inflation. While maintaining a solid approval rating throughout his first year, Lula ran into difficulties with his left-wing base. Some environmentalists accused the government of reneging on promises to ban genetically modified seeds, which Brazil accepted in hopes of better competing with the United States in soybean sales abroad, as well as improving the environment and fighting poverty.

Early in the first term, Lula moved to settle 400,000 poor families on land in the biggest land distribution under a single Brazilian government. Critics argue, however, that thousands more landless workers remain dispossessed of holdings that were taken illegally from them in years past and disagreed with a government plan to require the landless to buy back lands that should be rightfully theirs. Finally, Lula scored well with investors in the first term by pulling out of recession and posting 0.4 percent growth in the third quarter of 2003. While a far cry from the “spectacular growth” Lula had predicted at the start of the year, the economy stabilized and improved moderately. Central to the government’s stimulus package was Lula’s move to form a closer trade alliance with China, India, Russia, South Africa, and other emerging markets, as a way of diversifying Brazil’s foreign markets and offsetting the nation’s dependence on the U.S. consumer market. This effort met with displeasure in the United States, as well as in Belgium and Japan, because closer links between China and Brazil, in particular, cut against the flexibility the dominant nations like to protect.

The primary problem Lula faced in the first term stemmed from within his own party. Accusations of vote tampering, corruption, and graft brought down much of the top leadership of the PT and Lula’s own close advisers but managed to leave the president in office, if badly scarred. A much weakened PT entered the 2006 elections poised to lose seats but hopeful of holding the executive. Again forced into a runoff, Lula still managed to carry 20 of 26 states and the federal district, drawing his support from the poorest districts of the North, while losing or splitting the prosperous South. No doubt his reputation as a poor worker who made it to the top resonated with the traditional PT supporters in the countryside and with unions, but the key issue was fear of a return to the domination of big business. Geraldo Alckmin ran on a program intent on restoring the pro-business agenda and rolling back the social gains of the PT first term. Lula won with nearly the same margin as he had in 2002. He had not delivered the workers’ paradise promised in the first term, but he was viewed as far better than the alternative.

The picture since 2006 has been free of scandal, major corruption, and the debilitating bickering that characterized Lula’s first term. A more mature government has demonstrated an ability to forge a consensus among neighboring governments in Argentina, Bolivia, and Venezuela that have been racked with conflict and to begin to enact a series of reforms at home. Stable growth has been a political advantage, but it remains to be seen whether the many who endure lives of desperate poverty will be willing to wait until (if ever) the rising tide of prosperity lifts all boats.

**Economic Growth**

Any quick summary of Brazil’s economic prospects seems to be remarkably uniform. Most say that it is a country of vast natural resources, an immense pool of labor, and the leading economic power and potentially the most important political power in South America. A Goldman Sachs economist, Jim O’Neill, coined the term BRIC for the nations he predicted to become the economic powerhouses in the year 2050: Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Brazil’s place in this group of emerging powers is owing to its large and well-developed agricultural, mining, manufacturing, extractive, and service sectors. The exploitation of the huge Tupi petroleum field, combined with the widespread use of renewable sugar-based ethanol for most ground transportation, would seem to ensure a very bright future. Nonetheless, this bright economic picture dims in the face of such problems as highly unequal income distribution, persistent poverty, numerous educational challenges—especially in the vast rural areas—and high crime rates. Brazil escaped the severe economic crisis that gripped neighboring Argentina in 2001–03, with only minor financial turmoil; however, the deep financial crisis beginning in late 2008 cut into growth projections.

In essence, the financial and economic picture is generally ambiguous, and Brazil’s outlook varies according to the point of view of the economic analyst. International market sources herald the fact that Brazil’s growth has yielded increases in employment and real wages, particularly applauding the responsible payment of the tremendous debt inherited from the years of mismanagement under the military government. The CIA World Factbook applauded the PT government, noting that “Lula da Silva restated his commitment to fiscal responsibility by maintaining the country’s primary surplus during the 2006 election. Following his second inauguration, Lula [da Silva] announced a package of further economic reforms to reduce taxes and increase investment in infrastructure” (CIA Factbook, 2008). On the other hand, Duncan Green in the Financial Times remarks that the World Bank, not the usual source of radical pronouncements, contends that all the poor in Latin America could be raised above the poverty line by enacting as little as a 2 percent income tax increase on
persists today. At the end of the 1980s, 17.2 million people above the age of 15, about 15 percent, concentrated mainly in the Northeast, were illiterate. After more than two decades of democracy and increased social spending, 89 percent of the total population can read and write, a gain of 4 percent. As the population has increased, from about 120 million in 1980 to 198 million today, so has the number of adult illiterates. In contrast to Brazil, literacy in neighboring Argentina stands at 95 percent. Only 3.5 percent of Brazil’s population attended college in the 1980s, a figure that has increased only slightly by century’s end. An adequate homegrown technological stratum of workers seems far off. Poor education levels are a severe impediment to a nation that expects to compete in a world that increasingly relies on an educated, technologically savvy workforce. Moreover, dire economic problems have skimmed off the top layer of educated and skilled members of society, who recently have immigrated

Vendors such as this woman in Belém sell herbs for cooking and as cures for a wide range of ailments. Too poor to go to a doctor, many people rely on herbal cures. (Photograph by Erich Goode)

the wealthiest fifth of the population (CLAH, 503). Brazil’s path to social equality and a better standard of living for the majority of its people is a matter of political will more than just economic prosperity.

Poverty
The neglect of the welfare of the Brazilian majority has been a long-standing phenomenon that accelerated during the military dictatorship and

SENATOR FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The reality of improved opportunities for some Brazilians, even if only a few, is exemplified in the life history of Senator Benedicta da Silva. Known as “Benê,” she is from a family of 13 children born and raised in a Rio de Janeiro shantytown, Chapéu Manguereira. She worked as a maid, earning so little money that she was unable to buy medical care for her children. Two of her four children died of curable diseases. She was exploited, raped, humiliated, and nearly died of an illegal abortion. Despite this history of deprivation, da Silva emerged as a leader in her neighborhood when she organized community members to demand water, sewers, and electricity for their poorly serviced favela. As an adult, she learned to read and write and has instructed others. In the waning days of the military dictatorship, she became involved in politics, ran for office, and was elected to the Rio de Janeiro city council on the Workers Party ticket. In subsequent elections, she ran for, and won, office as a federal deputy and later as a senator.

A well-known figure in the halls of the Brazilian Congress, Senator da Silva was an active proponent of benefits for poor, working people, a supporter of policies to help the many street children in Brazil’s cities, and an advocate of rights for the indigenous population and for environmental protection. In 2006, she was Lula’s campaign coordinator in the state of Rio de Janeiro in his successful reelection bid. Da Silva continues to live in Chapéu Manguereira, from which she maintains an active role in local, regional, and national politics.
by the thousands to the United States, Canada, and Europe. Large numbers of people make a subsistence living selling whatever they can on the streets of Brazil’s cities and taking jobs at lower skill levels abroad.

Highly unequal income distribution remains a pressing problem. Whereas the richest 10 percent of households in 2007 earned 46 percent of the nation’s total income, the poorest 10 percent had less than 1 percent, figures that have changed little over the last five years. Poverty and the government’s lack of attention to public health have resulted in the spread of epidemic diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis. In 1989, a cholera epidemic struck 1.1 million people. On the other hand, the average life expectancy was 63 years in 2000 and has now increased to 73 years, with a corresponding drop in the percentage of the population over the age of 65 from 8 to 6.4 percent. The average life span for men at the turn of the 21st century stood at 59 and is now 69; for women the average of 68 years has increased to 77. Dire predictions of increased mortality rates have proven untrue, mainly because Brazil has done remarkably well in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Effects of Persistent Inequality
If Benedita da Silva is the face of possibility and change that has marked the democratic transition in Brazilian life, urban crime is the real evidence of persistent poverty: Impersonal statistics of low rates of literacy, inadequate education, entrenched poverty, and high unemployment come alive on the streets of Brazil’s major cities in all too visible criminal activity. Note for example that with 198 million inhabitants, Brazil is South America’s most populous country, and São Paulo, with 18 million residents, is the continent’s largest city and the world’s fourth largest. Another dubious honor, however, is that Brazil ranks near the top in worldwide calculations of crime statistics. In 1997, 1,335 Brazilians were killed during robberies. By the end of 1999, that number had tripled. According to statistics from the Center for the Study of Violence, in São Paulo, Brazil has an annual homicide rate of 25 per 100,000 inhabitants. By comparison, in the United States, the country with the highest per capita crime rate of the industrialized world, there are 11 homicides per 100,000 people. The perpetrators of robberies are often young drug addicts, while the victims are often young women. Murders are committed most often by men, a large number of whom appear to be in uniform. In 1999, in São Paulo alone, the police killed 380 civilians, most in execution style.

Crime is a frequent subject of discussion in the Brazilian media, where the methods of attack on victims and the crime scenes are publicized in gory detail. Several common scenarios are for thieves in suburban utility vehicles to sandwich a car against the curb at a stoplight and demand money from the driver by holding a gun to his or her head. Other armed robbers pounce at condominium entrances, outside banks, and even on downtown streets. A recent feature on the crime scene, which affects a broad section of the middle and working-class population, is the sequestro relâmpago, or “lightning kidnap.” A person is grabbed at random off a downtown street and forced at gunpoint to make a withdrawal at an automated teller machine. In some cases, if the person does not have enough money in his or her account to satisfy the thief, the victim is simply executed. As a precaution, Paulistas usually carry a wad of cash and an ATM card with them at all times, so that they can appease a robber in case they are mugged.

Even the very rich, or visiting celebrities and sports teams, have not been spared. In one well-publicized case, three international teams in Brazil for the 2001 Formula One Grand Prix were victims of violence. The British manager of the Minardi team was cornered after he left the bank with $8,000 to cover the team’s weekend expenses, pistol whipped, and robbed. Other teams lost tires, auto equipment, and laptop computers. Another high-profile incident occurred in June 2008 when Pelé, a “national treasure,” was robbed at gunpoint in Santos.
transportation or walk to work. The cities of Brazil sport woefully inadequate public transportation systems. Commuters routinely spend one to three hours on busses slogging through streets choked in exhaust fumes in the heat and flooded when it rains, exposed to marauding criminals. Buses in Rio or São Paulo frequently travel less than 10 MPH because the streets are so packed with vehicles. If it were safe enough, many commuters report that they would walk or ride bicycles. Although both Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo have limited subway systems, they in no way service the majority of commuters. In comparison, Mexico City, a city of comparable size and level of development, moves its vast population on far-reaching subway lines, while cities such as Tokyo, London, and Paris move nearly twice as many commuters on public bus, rail and subway lines than does São Paulo.

The statistics on crime, inadequate public transportation, and horrendous levels of pollution signal the needs any government concerned with improving the welfare of the majority should be addressing. According to Jorge Wilhelm, a professor of urban affairs and former planner for the state of São Paulo, cities in Brazil have become places abandoned to poor people and bandits, avoided by the rich and the middle class. “This organization of society could get worse, and we shall go through life as some of the worst science fiction films.” In the words of Luís Antonio de Sousa of the São Paulo Center for the Study of Violence, “Brazilian citizens are prisoners of their own fear” (Los Angeles Times, March 26, 2001).

The Environment

Many feel that the intersection between social woes and the overall quality of life is represented by concern over the environment. The Rio de Janeiro–based Economy and Energy Institute published a study in 2007 noting that between 1994 and 2005, carbon dioxide output grew by 45 percent, with annual greenhouse gas production outstripping economic growth. “The country is polluting more than the wealth it is creating,” according to the newspaper account of the study. Moreover, these figures did not include emissions from the deforestation of the Amazon, which, if included, would make Brazil “the fifth-biggest polluter in the world.”

As with so many things, Brazil has a mixed reputation with regard to concern for the environment. In June 1992, Rio de Janeiro hosted the second international conference on the environment and development. (The first had been in Stockholm 10 years earlier.) By choosing a Latin American country, and Brazil in particular, as the site for the conference, the United Nations sought to draw attention to the well-known...
environmental issues on the continent and in Brazil. While many Brazilians decry pollution, much of the world's attention has focused on preservation of the Amazon. The human quest to tame the Amazon forest and extract its wealth, a part of Brazil's development scheme to provide the resources to raise the standard of living, has victimized biological diversity. As with many other emerging economies, Brazil tocs a line between environmental degradation and industrial development.

Since the early 16th century, adventurers and explorers have exploited the region for minerals, animal skins, gold, emeralds, oil, rubber, and a host of precious stones. Gold miners have polluted the river and its tributaries with mercury and other chemicals; lumber companies and industries searching for iron, aluminum, petroleum, and other raw materials have contributed to the ongoing destruction of the forest. In less than 500 years, one of the richest ecosystems on the planet that sustained millions of inhabitants for millennia has fallen on the list of severely endangered environments. After years of lobbying by environmental groups, in September 1999 President Cardoso signed an environmental crime bill that for the first time defined pollution and deforestation as crimes punishable by stiff fines and jail sentences. Unfortunately, many large corporate polluters, ranchers, and mining companies have been able to avoid prosecution and conviction. Many have openly defied the government's attempts to impose legal restraints or, more often, been able to protect themselves by buying off the local law enforcement officials.

Industrialists and developers have continued to search the Amazon for resources. In fact, the 20th century has seen the greatest exploitation of the rain forest basin, bringing with it threats to the continued existence of this major reservoir of the world's natural resources. The changes have been threefold: destruction of the indigenous community, exploitation of land and mineral resources by multinational and national enterprises, and migration to the region of large numbers of non-natives.

Despite earlier interaction between outsiders and the indigenous population dating back to the 16th century, the first sustained contact with native Amazonian people began in 1947. It has not been an encounter that has benefited the Indians. Overall, the indigenous population has decreased dramatically in the 20th century as a result of disease, loss of land to ranchers and squatters from other parts of Brazil, usurpation of Indian lands by miners and gold prospectors, and the Indians' inability to maintain their traditional lifestyle in the face of encroachment from the outside.

Brazil's 20th-century Indian policy has been fraught with contradictions. Since the 1940s, the Brazilian Indians concentrated in the regions of Mato Grosso and Amazonia have attempted to bring their situation to the attention of the world, without suffering great loss. One group of Indian activists was the Villas Boas brothers, who were members of the survey expedition sent into unexplored territory in 1943. When they arrived in the Upper Xingu River Basin, the three brothers, Caludio, Orlando, and Leonardo, determined to stay and protect the endangered Indians. They were successful in 1961 in persuading the Brazilian government to set aside most of the Upper Xingu
region as a reserve (8,800 square miles). This park remained a reserve and has been kept off limits from encroachers, a success that has not been achieved in other areas.

Like other Latin American governments, Brazil's has not been anxious to negotiate with the many Indian tribes. The weak administrative structures of the Indian communities, worn down by centuries of disruption, have found it difficult to reach agreement with the centralized modern political administrations of Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, and Guyana. Finally, after years of negotiations, in 1991–92, both Brazil and Venezuela set aside 45 million acres of land as designated indigenous territory. For the native peoples of the Amazon, this may be too little too late. A population estimated between 4 million and 6 million Indians in 1500 stands today at about 320,000, divided among 215 ethnic groups, or 0.2 percent of Brazil's current population.

Exploitation of Amazonia's resources continued apace throughout the second half of the 20th century. The federal government launched programs to attract homesteaders, as well as offered tax incentives and subsidies to businesses willing to exploit the region's resources and promote the integration of the Amazon region into the national economy. One of the primary means of integrating the region was the construction of a series of roads and highways linking the area to the capital in Brasilia. Highways have facilitated the movement of people and goods

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**CUBATÃO: THE CLEANUP CONTINUES**

The situation in Amazonia frequently captures world headlines, but many other areas are of equal or greater significance. One site that has attracted considerable attention since the 1970s is the city of Cubatão, south of São Paulo. Once considered one of the most polluted places on the planet, rivaling Bhopal, India, as an environmental disaster site, or city awaiting disaster, Cubatão’s water, soil, and air were saturated with deadly contaminants, including high levels of DDT. It registered cancer and infant mortality rates hundreds of times above even the Brazilian average. In the 1980s, a report detailed that there were so many miscarriages in the city, women faced pregnancy with horror, and the town was running out of places to bury stillborn children. In the 1990s, with the assistance of a loan from the World Bank, the local government was able to launch a cleanup effort that significantly reduced pollution by forcing the close of some of the worst factories and promoting better standards for others that remained.

Although Brazil has declared Cubatão clean, Greenpeace has criticized the continuing level of pollution in its *International Report*. In January 1999, activists fenced off a contaminated area containing waste from a Rhône-Poulenc plant, noting that persistent pollutants such as hexachlorobenzene (HCB) and HCBD (hexachlorobutadiene), by-products from chemical processes using chlorine, remain in the ground. For example, the Rhône-Poulenc plant was ordered closed in 1993, but activists contend that toxic elements continue to be released into the environment.

The Cubatão case is often pointed to as the long-term problem with environmental pollution. Although the government has been able to reduce significantly the level of current and future contamination, the effects from saturation of the soil in particular remain long-term ones. Marcelo Furtado of Greenpeace International argues that the site will only be clean when the toxic substances in the ground and water are eliminated. According to research by United Nations environmental agencies and the International Association for Research on Cancer (IARC), HCB and HCBD are possible human carcinogens. Since they collect in the fatty tissue of animals, they enter the food chain, and contaminants pass from mother to child in the womb and through breast-feeding.
into the formerly sparsely settled region, promoted the founding of towns along the roads, and augmented the settlement of urban areas. Agricultural homesteads, however, have proven unsuccessful, owing to the infertility of the soil. By contrast, lumber companies, large-scale cattle ranching, and extractive mining of gold, manganese, iron, and copper have been profitable. Needless to say, these are all enterprises that rely on large-scale production and are highly capital intensive. In that regard, the Amazon has developed, not as a level frontier where upstarts can earn a good living by working hard and tilling the soil, but it has mirrored the rest of Brazil's class structure of a few rich at the top and many poor at the bottom.

The environmental consequences of this development pattern in Brazil have been widely reported. Protection of the Amazon, as well as of the indigenous people who inhabit it, has become an international concern, attracting the attention of environmental and human-rights advocates, rock stars and celebrities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations, and other international government agencies. In fact, it is during the recent period that questions have been raised about who should have jurisdiction over the Amazon region: Brazil or the world at large? Many environmentalists and scientific researchers argue the Amazon rain forest is too precious a resource to be held by one nation. Moreover, the endless search for the modern-day Eldorado has turned millions of acres of rain forest into wasteland. In so doing, environmental advocates and scientists contend, the keys to the future of life on the planet, both in terms of oxygen supplies from plant life and the medicinal qualities available from thousands of plant species, are being lost. Regardless of formal ownership, the protection of the Amazon's resources remains, or should remain, closely watched by international bodies.

Environmental Activism

Many activists in Brazil are working hard to show that protection of the environment is a priority. Since the return of democratic government, environmental activism has increased decidedly both on a local and national level. Brazil is one of the few countries of Latin America, or the world for that matter, to have an entire ministry devoted exclusively to environmental policies and oversight. Many "green" activists argue that with proper oversight, the fate of the Amazon will not go the way of the Atlantic forest in centuries past. Whereas less than 7 percent of the original growth that forested the coastline remains, almost 90 percent of the Amazon rain forest is intact. Bringing back the forest to the coastline and preserving the jungle of the Amazon basin are, therefore, two key aspects of current conservation efforts.

There are, nonetheless, those who have little interest in preservation who have shown they will go to any length to undermine the environmental cause. Environmental activists have been threatened, physically assaulted, repeatedly ridiculed, and even killed. In December 1988, a well-known activist and leader of the rubber tapper trade union, Francisco "Chico" Mendes Filho (1944–88) was killed in front of his home in Xapuri, Acre.

Chico Mendes had gained international acclaim for his work in founding the Xapuri Rural Workers Union in 1977. Under Mendes's leadership, the union organized health clinics, set up education classes for members and their children, and disseminated information on environmental issues to residents in the area. With the assistance of an anthropologist working in the area, Mendes formed the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS) as a kind of mutual-aid society. Residents of this most remote of all areas of Brazil for the first time learned of their rights as citizens, formed into cooperatives, and learned the benefits of collective bargaining.
One of the most important ecological innovations of the CNS was the promotion of "extractive reserves." This was a method whereby rubber tappers and their families could live off designated reserves by extracting only the rubber and other resources necessary for their subsistence without bringing harm to the forest. Mendes brought his program to the United Nations, presented it to members of the U.S. Congress, and argued for the designation of extractive reserves before the Brazilian Congress. His efforts paid off. In 1988, the Brazilian government expropriated land from landowners in Acre to provide for the first extractive reserve program.

The landowners immediately retaliated. Chico Mendes received death threats, members of the rubber tappers' union and their families were harassed, and at least one tapper was killed. On December 22, 1988, Chico Mendes himself was murdered in front of his house. Indicative of the impunity with which the landowners in the area operated, the crime took place at midday in full view of Mendes's neighbors. The police ordered to protect Mendes and his family "mysteriously" disappeared from the front of the house when the assassins approached.

Because of the national and international reputation Chico Mendes had achieved, and because of the attention that had been drawn to the rubber tappers' campaign, the local government was forced to investigate the death. In December 1990, two local landowners were convicted of committing the murder. Despite allegations of a wider involvement—Mendes had named his assassins in a letter to the governor earlier in the year—including a network of at least 30 landowners, the investigation was not broadened.

Chico Mendes had often declared that the most powerful ally to the Brazilian rubber tappers was the international environmental movement. Indeed, it was owing to international pressure that Mendes's killers were brought to trial. By 1990, Brazil was attracting a great deal of attention. Media throughout the world reported on the killing of street children, human-rights violations, and harassment of environmental activists. Embarrassed by the spotlight on corruption in the environmental agencies, President Collor fired the minister of the environment and initiated an investigation of corruption in the ministry. Collor's own impeachment on corruption charges truncated the cleanup however.

Challenges to Environmental Activism
A case that galvanized the human-rights and environmental movement was the murder of Ademir Federicci (1959–2001) in August 2001. Both the boldness of the attack and the impunity with which local landowners and loggers threatened Federicci drew international attention to the case. Reportedly 18 months before his death, Dema, as the popular peasant and environmental leader was known, was told by a wealthy logger "to buy some wood for his coffin" (New York Times, October 12, 2001).

Federicci was the director of the Movement for the Development of the Trans-Amazon and the Xingu. He had reported on illegal deforestation on Indian reserves, opposed a government dam project that would benefit only the big landowners and drive out the small holders, and had attempted to stop car thieves and hijackers from terrorizing users of the Trans-Amazon Highway. Similar to Chico Mendes, Federicci was a man from a poor background, having little formal education but enormous charisma. In addition to religious, environmental, and labor leaders, he had provided effective leadership to the grassroots movement to preserve the land, protect the indigenous and peasant population of northern Pará, and pressure the government to enforce laws. He was the seventh in a continuing line of local leaders to be killed for his efforts.

The cases of Dema Federicci and Chico Mendes expose the ineffectiveness of the government policing, regulatory, and administrative apparatus, especially in the distant Amazon regions. If deaths of activists are frequent, threats against anyone who stands in the way of the loggers are practically commonplace. The representative from Pará to the national Chamber of Deputies, José Geraldo Torres, a member of the Workers Party, has been pressured to protect land titles for wealthy loggers. One logger, traveling on a plane with a friend of Deputy Torres, loudly proclaimed in front of all the passengers, "You tell José Geraldo that if my land title gets canceled, I will cancel him" (New York Times, October 12, 2001).

The Catholic Church: Advocate for Social Reform
The Catholic Church and priests in many rural areas have taken stands against corrupt government officials and local landowners. The pattern of church activism stretches back to the 1960s when members of the Catholic clergy began to speak out against human-rights abuses. The doctrine of liberation theology that swept much of Latin America found a particularly strong set of advocates in Brazil. Organized through Christian base communities (comunidades eclesiasicas da base, or CEBs), radical clergy and nuns organized in the backlands, in urban favelas, and among progressive students and activists in support of rights for peasants, Indians, protection of the environment, and
labor unions. For their efforts, some have been killed, and a number has endured the censure of the Vatican. Leonardo Boff, one of the movement's foremost theologians, resigned the priesthood in 1992 after many years of conflict with Rome, while others, such as Archbishops Paulo Evaristo Arns of São Paulo and Hélder Câmara in Recife, were replaced by more conservative clerics after their retirement. On most issues the liberal voice of the church remains strong. However, consistent with Vatican doctrine, the Brazilian Church has blocked legislation to decriminalize abortion. Reproductive rights advocates were distressed in 2005 when Lula promised the church hierarchy that he would not support abortion rights.

Probably the single greatest threat to Catholic hegemony has come from Pentecostal and evangelical Protestant sects. Advocating individual salvation in the place of social reform, these rapidly expanding religious groups place fewer demands for social action on their followers. The devout do not have to learn to read or to protest bad government. At the same time, many evangelicals rejoice in the stability these movements advocate, including sobriety, honesty, and hard work. Many women, for example, find the pressure from the evangelical churches on men to stay sober, tend their families, and eschew violence has brought more tranquility to the domestic sphere.

Social Reforms on a Local Level

Church organizations, environmentalists, and labor leaders at century's end began coalescing around a critique of neoliberalism. In 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2005, thousands of activists met in Porto Alegre to declare their opposition to the global agenda promoted by the World Bank, IMF, and other international bodies. The conference, dubbed the World Social Forum (WSF), first met in 2001 at the same time as the World Economic Forum, a meeting of leading economic advisers to the world's wealthiest nations, was being held in Davos, Switzerland. At its first meeting in 2001, Porto Alegre drew together a core of international trade union, feminist, environmental, and human-rights workers. Although more heavily represented by members from Latin America, this is a group that overlaps with antiglobalization activists who have demonstrated at meetings of the IMF and World Bank in Genoa, Italy, Seattle, and other places. The Porto Alegre meetings in 2002 and 2003 attracted a wider range of participants, including a large number of politicians from Europe and other parts of the world. Politicians campaigning for office in France took time out to travel to the WSF, as a way of demonstrating their concerns for ecological and social justice issues. The meetings have moved to sites outside Brazil over the last decade, including Mumbai (2004), Caracas (2006), Nairobi (2007), and returned to the Amazonian city of Belem in January 2009, after a year when the forum did not meet anywhere. The meetings have grown in size and influence since 2001, issuing calls for debt cancellation for poorer countries, dismantling tax havens, universal employment and social welfare, environmental protection, demands for food, peace, security, human rights, and social justice for the world's people. The list of WSF speakers, and signatories to statements, such as the 2005 Porto Alegre Manifesto enumerating the organization's demands, include Nobel Prize winners, major authors, intellectuals, scientists, and social activists.

Local and Global Initiatives

Tasso Genro, the mayor of Porto Alegre, was the moving force behind the early World Social Forum. The citizens of Porto Alegre, a city of 1.3 million people and capital of Brazil's southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul, had seen at close hand the December 2001 demise of the Argentine economic and political system, an event many blame on the neoliberal financial policy of world banks and loan institutions. Porto Alegre and the state of Rio Grande do Sul both have been in the hands of the PT since 1998. Experimenting with grassroots residents' democracy, the state and city have instituted a wide range of locally based initiatives to launch self-help projects and distribute public funds. Residents claim to be integrally involved in financial planning, and the reported success of Genro's initiative helped him attain appointment as Lula's minister of justice in Brasilia.

Foremost among Brazil's social activist organizations is the Landless Workers' Movement, or MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra). Claiming 1.5 million members organized in 23 of the country's 26 states, the MST is often said to be the largest social movement in Latin America. Fortified by Article 186 of the 1988 constitution, which states that land must serve "a social function," the MST leads occupations of vacant and underutilized land. In a country where reportedly 1.6 percent of landowners control almost half (46.8 percent) of the land suitable for supporting a crop, the MST considers itself the guardian of productivity.

Although landowners dispute the MST claims, and violence between owners and squatters is common, the latter have registered many victories in the courts. Judges have ruled in favor of the MST when squatters have successfully shown that existing plots are not in compliance with
the four constitutional requirements for all stewardship of property: (1) rational and adequate use of land; (2) adequate use of available natural resources and preservation of the environment; (3) compliance with the provisions that regulate labor relations; and (4) exploitation that favors the well-being of the owners and workers.

Drawing on the 1988 constitution has proved highly effective in pushing a reform agenda on other issues as well. Article 68 allows titles for land claimed by communities derived from those originally formed by runaway slaves, called quilombos, to pass into the ownership of the inhabitants. Although fewer than 100 of these have been granted to the occupants, there are estimated to be more than 2,000 quilombos that could fall into the hands of rural descendants of former slaves. Another area of dispute that has arisen as a result of this law is the claim that many rural dwellers, not quilombor, actually had title to land but lost it in land grabs by big landowners, especially during the military dictatorship. Their claims are not directly addressed in Article 68.

Redressing Racial Inequality

The most controversial issue in contemporary Brazil that has arisen from the constitution's grant of social equality is the claim for redress of grievances owing to racial discrimination. In 2003, the federal government began to implement an affirmative-action policy in university admissions, which by 2005 had expanded to a call for racial quotas. Highly controversial in a society that has long claimed no racial discrimination and in which racial categorization does not exist as a census or official category, implementation has proved problematic. By 2008, there were four state universities with specific racial and social class quotas. In a few cases, students are required to self-identify according to race, and in others, a panel of experts reviews files to determine eligibility.

Another step in redressing racial discrimination is the establishment of a university in São Paulo specifically for Afro-descendant students. The Universidade da Cidadania Zumbi Palmares de São Paulo, known as UniPalmares, is named for the hero of the 17th-century runaway slave community and its leader, Zumbi. UniPalmares graduated its first class in 2008, 90 percent of whom were self-declared as black. Indicative of the extent of official backing for this controversial program, Lula gave the commencement speech, and major dignitaries of the state and local government were all in attendance. While fraught with complications, these steps toward recognizing the legacy of slavery and the existence of racism are entirely novel in the history of Brazilians' identity.

In other ways, an active judiciary has been forcing change that has proven more cumbersome on the political front. In July 2001, Colonel Ubiratan Guimarães was convicted of charges stemming from the execution of more than 100 prisoners following an uprising at the notoriously overcrowded Carandiru Prison in 1992. Colonel Guimarães was sentenced to 600 years in prison for his part in the massacre (although it would be unprecedented for a powerful military officer to serve out a sentence). Eighty-four prison officials have been indicted in the death of 111 prisoners who, according to survivors, were shot at point-blank range as they tried to surrender. The São Paulo prison, really a jail, built to hold 8,000, now houses as many as 20,000 prisoners, most of whom are awaiting trial or are being held without charge.

The government has renewed its attempts to confront the continuing issue of violence and crime, as well as the public's disgust with corrupt law enforcement. Under Cardoso, the Ministry of Justice appointed as secretary for human rights Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, former University of São Paulo history professor and coordinator of the Nucleus of Violence Studies. As a founding member of the Center for the Study of Violence, Professor Pinheiro was a frequent and outspoken critic of police brutality and official misuse of power. He and members of the center's head have been threatened for their tireless work to expose official corruption, denounce torture, and to bring to the public's attention violence.

In the fall 2001, the Ministry of Justice called for tough new measures against torture, police violence, and intimidation of political activists. Skeptical observers contend that until Brazil resolves the wide gap between rich and poor, the lack of social services for the majority of the population, and widespread crime, any attempt to resolve corruption will fail. Professor Pinheiro is more optimistic. He has demonstrated that it is possible to work with government institutions to promote human rights, that many agencies are receptive to learning alternative strategies, and that the rate of police violence and civilian violence can be stemmed. Currently, President da Silva has found, as did Cardoso before him, that the only permanent guarantee for peace and human rights rests with ending the extreme social inequalities that characterize Brazilian society.

**Brazil's Prospects for the Future**

Brazil is a country beginning the 21st century with formidable problems. Inefficiency, corruption, crime, underemployment, and unemployment take a severe toll on resources that could go toward making real improvements in the quality of life for more of the nation's population. With that in mind, increased investment in the needs of Brazil's people would produce a more equitable society. At the same time, Brazil is a nation equipped with many resources, both human and natural, from which to build a better future. In which direction the country will move in the next decades is an open question. Many analysts fear that the economic problems, and the resultant civil disorder, that periodically have racked Argentina could erupt in Brazil. Others are more optimistic and argue that Brazil's larger economy and considerable resources may help stave off a crisis even as the world enters a severe economic recession. Brazil has an ample supply of natural resources that are in high demand on the world market and the capacity for vast industrial output. While a prolonged recession in the United States would have negative effects, Brazil's large and widely diverse trading partners might provide some protection from the worst effects of economic crises.

Most important, one cannot fail to be impressed with the indomitable spirit of Brazil's citizens. The amazing ingenuity of its literary, artistic, and cultural community, in addition to the work of tireless social reformers, promises to carve out a place for Brazil among nations as a vital, innovative, and constantly renewing country. Despite its many problems, Brazil's greatest resource remains its remarkable people.

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**APPENDIX 1**

**BASIC FACTS ABOUT BRAZIL**

**Official Name**
Federative Republic of Brazil

**Government**
Under the Constitution of 1988, Brazil is a federal republic with a centralized government under an elected president. The president and vice president serve a four-year term and, under a 1997 amendment to the Constitution, may serve a second consecutive term. The bicameral national congress is made up of a chamber of deputies and a senate. The third branch of the government is the judiciary, headed by an 11-member supreme court.

As of 2008 there are 20 main political parties, and no one has been dominant since the country emerged from military rule in 1988. In recent elections the four parties that garnered the most votes nationally were: the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), the Democrats (DEM), formerly the Liberal Front Party (PFL), the Liberal Front Party (PFL), the Workers Party (PT), and the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB).

**Political Divisions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Twenty-six plus the federal district, which includes the capital.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Brasilia</td>
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</table>

**Geography**

| Area    | Brazil covers an area of 3,286,488 square miles and is larger than all of western Europe combined. It is the largest country of Latin America and fifth largest in the |